



## Understanding Tourists' Complex Food Relations

Therkelsen, Anette; Blichfeldt, Bodil Stilling

*Publication date:*  
2011

*Document Version*  
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Therkelsen, A., & Blichfeldt, B. S. (2011). *Understanding Tourists' Complex Food Relations*. Abstract from European Culinary Tourism Conference, Wien, Austria.

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at [vbn@aub.aau.dk](mailto:vbn@aub.aau.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

---

# Understanding Tourists' Complex Food Relations

**Associate Professor, Ph.D., Anette Therkelsen**

*Aalborg University, Fibigerstræde 2, 9220 Aalborg Ø, DK,*

**Associate Professor, Ph.D., Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt**

*University of Southern Denmark, Bohrs Vej 9, 6700 Esbjerg, DK,*

---

## **ABSTRACT**

A series of classifications on tourists and food exist. The qualitative interviews upon which this paper draws, however, indicate that tourists' relations to food are more complex than extant classifications suggest, for instance in terms of variety sought. The paper discusses these complexities and points to implications for future research.

**Key Words:** Food tourists, consumption patterns, novel food, familiar food, variety-seeking

## **1 OBJECTIVE**

A common denominator in the literature on tourism related food consumption is that tourists are classified as *either* being attracted to novel food *or* as individuals that prefer familiar food, thus suggesting that tourists' relations to food are rather stable and static. However, as few in-depth studies actually exist of tourists' food related consumption patterns, we do not know whether existing classifications constitute adequate descriptions. The purpose of this paper is hence to discuss the roles food play for tourist and particularly to suggest whether these roles align with extant theory.

## **2 MATERIAL & METHODS**

In order to better understand tourists' actual eating practices and reactions to eating opportunities, the paper is based on 20 in-depth interviews with Danish couples and families with children.

### 3 RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary results suggest that some tourists do not align well with existing categorizations as relations to food vary, not just across holidays but particularly within the context of a single holiday. For example, sometimes tourists choose a ‘boring’ sandwich and at other occasions they prefer either ‘gourmet food’ or local food. Hence their relations to food are thus neither stable, nor static during the holidays. Deliberately seeking variety is ignored by these ‘either/or’ classifications. Accordingly, to ‘box’ tourists makes us ignore the variety seeking behavior that some tourists apply in order for food to be ‘non-boring’ or even act as peak experiences. Furthermore, the study indicates that if we wish to understand tourists’ relations to food, we need detailed studies of tourists’ actual eating practices as such practices seem far more unstable and multi-faceted than extant theory suggests.

**Contact:** at@ihis.aau.dk

### REFERENCES

- Kim Y, Yuan J, Goh B, Antun J. Web Marketing in Food Tourism: A Content Analysis of Web Sites in West Texas. *Journal of Culinary Science and Technology* 2009; 7(1): 52-64
- Hall C, Sharples M, Mitchell R, Macionis N, Cambourne B. Food Tourism around the World: Development, Management and Markets. Woburn, MA: Butterworth Heinemann, 2003
- Henderson J. Food Tourism Reviewed. *British Food Journal* 2009; 111(4): 317-326
- Hjalager A, Richards G. Tourism and Gastronomy. London: Routledge, 2002
- Westering J. Heritage and Gastronomy: The Pursuits of the ‘New Tourists’. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 1999; 5(2): 75-81
- Kivela J, Crotts J. Tourism and gastronomy: Gastronomy’s Influence on How Tourists Experience a Destination. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* 2006; 30(3): 354-377
- Cohen E, Avieli N. Food in Tourism – Attraction and Impediment. *Annals of Tourism Research* 2004; 31(4): 755-778
- Quan S, Wang N, Towards a Structural Model of the Tourist Experience: An Illustration from Food Experiences in Tourism. *Tourism Management* 2004; 25(3): 297-305
- Hjalager, A. What do tourists eat and why? *Tourism* 2004, 52(2):195-201